

SALISBURY DIARY

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FROM the top of the kopje you can see for yourself a microcosm of all the kingdoms of the modern world, done in Rebecca West's "morbid pallor of concrete". The 'growing skyline of Salisbury' is now dominated by a rather spectacular secular temple, Pearl Assurance House, a 'symbol of confidence' of sixteen storeys, most of them unlet. On its roof is a four-legged caliper clutching a light-of-the-world visible, it is said, at ninety miles. Anyhow, it easily picks out Mount Hampden ten miles to the west, the point at which the Pioneers thought they had arrived on that September day in 1890. Of course 'the map was wrong' and Frank Johnson, leader of the expedition, did not hesitate to announce that the column had reached its destination as he dismissed it. If errors of plan and statement have been endemic in the Rhodesian record ever since, it ought to be pondered as well that this general level of mild incompetence has so far saved the country from any threat of efficient tyranny. South Africans, for instance, might well envy such a saving grace while scoffing at 'the banana republic minus the bananas.'

Monument to 'man's monstrous idolatry of man', as long as he's white, Salisbury has a nucleus of not much more than a square-mile, with satellite suburban electrons along radii of up to ten miles. There are no local trains, and sparse and erratic buses for Europeans only, who anyhow still think of the private car as the public transport service. An almost total vacuum in professional entertainment beyond the cinema—there is no theatrical building intended as such, and, so far, no television—is padded out with a *perpetuum mobile* of political parties and meetings, a rotarianism of trade and industrial associations, schisms galore of religious and lay sodalities, and a sadism of amateur theatrical, musical and other-arty societies. There are a number of sports and other clubs, as difficult as they are expensive to get into.

Greater Salisbury has over 80,000 Europeans of mixed origin. Kariba, for instance, is directly or loosely responsible for an important Italian element. Africans number between 100,000 and 150,000, according to the political slant of one's guess. Other races, meaning chiefly Coloureds, about four thousand. In 1946 there were 21,000 Europeans, and 71,000 'employed'

Africans. How many unemployed Europeans, as well as Africans, there are to-day is a matter of propaganda. The fourfold European increase since 1946 represents in the main a variable stream of artisan immigrants from Great Britain and South Africa. The African increment is their retinue. Jacked-up into the realm of a privileged middle-class, the white artisan, in the course of directing and supervising black labour, has 'bossed it up' into imitating and demanding the skills, ambitions, mores and ethics of its white master. At least that is what the 'Old Rhodesians', those who settled in the country not later than the 'twenties, firmly believe. They maintain that responsibility for the present disastrous political and economic unrest lies with the post-war system of European immigration, which has created an African proletariat in the image of the white artisan.

That four-legged caliper on the roof of Pearl Assurance House might be a symbol of the fourfold 'financial establishment' that pays the Federal as well as the Salisbury piper—Messieurs the Anglo-American Corporation, the Rhodesian Selection Trust, the British South Africa Company, the Imperial Tobacco Company. If the American tycoon who said of Salisbury that he had seen ghost-cities before eventually proves right, it will not be before this quadrumvirate surrenders. Moreover the whole tight little pressure-group nexus is interlocking. The official organ of the 'political establishment' has the same telephone number as the best-known public relations consultant in the business. Even so, there are unrequited antagonisms. The conduct—and composition—of the Salisbury City Council is so remarkable that both 'establishments' sporadically comment upon it.

When Alistair, the 'Old Rhodesian' Scots farmer of broad acres, comes into town he likes to rehearse this tart jest: "My word, Salisbury looks more and more like London every time I see it. More and more black faces." He then mounts his hobby-horse of 'The Golden Age', when Southern Rhodesia was a nice little, tight little land-locked island where everybody knew everybody else and nobody had any money. When the 'muntu' was a thoroughly decent, happy fellow, who knew his place, and nobody locked up his doors or anything else. Later Alistair will round on the post-war immigrants: worthless rejects of the Welfare State; selfish evaders of English income tax and domestic chores; expatriate dead-beats without home or patriotism; economic dead-weights, subverters of the honest, contented African.

Almost as acid is his view of the lazy, incompetent, swollen Civil Services, sitting on their backsides and hanging their hats on an early pension. He has innumerable stories of their mismanagement, wastefulness and worse, furnished with elaborate picaresque detail. But the crescendo of his anathemas is reserved for those unscrupulous, self-seeking politicians who engineered Federation to save their own skins. Particularly for Huggins, in pursuit of peerage, with his grip tight on all the reins of power through the medium of his appointed yes-men ministers; and for Whitehead, whose fiscal policies sold Southern Rhodesia down the river for a mess of Northern Rhodesian copper.

If this version of the Federal parturition is too violently partisan for anything but qualified attention, it is at least consistent. Alistair and his kind of the old country school voted against Federation in 1953 for the very same reasons that they oppose it now. They don't want partnership, or they think it can't work, or both. Amongst their sort it is hard to find anyone who will admit to having favoured Federation at the time of the referendum, or to having changed his mind. It was they who chiefly went within an ace of putting the Dominion Party into power in Southern Rhodesia last year.

When Huggins paid the price for Federation by accepting Nyasaland into membership; when he put his signature to a constitution that professed a partnership between the two main races that would go forward to full status, within the Commonwealth, *only when the majority of the inhabitants of the three territories so desired*; had he any clear conception of what these commitments must entail, or did he simply not bother too much?

The sixty-three per cent of the electorate that voted Federation in probably had few misgivings about the terms of the contract. To Southern Rhodesians of the urban and late-coming type, it must have seemed a good financial proposition, and a good financial proposition was urgently needed. The prospectus was confident that Northern Rhodesian copper could not conceivably sink below £240 a ton (at this time of writing it is £220, and has been as low as £160 in the last two years), which should mean nice dividends for everybody in perpetuity. If they ever read the preamble to the proposed new constitution and spotted the bit about partnership, well, it was too vague to mean anything concretely unpleasant, probably just another bit of eyewash by Huggins with which to fool the British.

Even at this short distance, it is difficult to discern any clear

rationale to the key wording of the constitutional preamble. Sir John Moffat, now second pillar of the new Central Africa Party, who was thereabouts at the time, has said that the British Government left 'partnership' in the air and undefined on purpose.

Welensky, the shrewd pragmatist, very rarely uses the word 'partnership'. If asked his interpretation, he might very well run through the list of 'liberal measures' that Whitehead has propelled through the Southern Rhodesian Parliament this year. He would probably not mention that the most important and comprehensive of these, the Industrial Conciliation Act, was a full-grown child of Todd which Whitehead adopted. He would certainly add to them the removal of racial segregation, or at least its visible signs, from post-offices and railway-stations—a Federal achievement. This latter he would call 'removing unnecessary pin-pricks' from the educated African.

What really has to be removed are the pins themselves, if there is to be any chance of a return—some might say an original creation—of mutual race confidence. The two most poisonous banderillas are the Federal Franchise Act of 1958 and the Southern Rhodesian Land Apportionment Act. The first virtually excludes, and would do so for decades to come, the African from casting any effective number of votes for the forty-four 'elected' members in a parliament of fifty-nine. The second, a congeries of Acts and Amendments dating from 1930, is the local version of apartheid. It expressly prohibits the domestic, industrial and commercial intermingling of the races on a residential basis. How the British Government ever came to contrive and endorse a constitution devoted to the extension of racial co-operation, which contained in its living vitals this cancer of denial, is a mystery of almost theological incomprehensibility. The small breach in this doctrine made by Whitehead, in a recent amendment permitting multi-racial hotels in European areas, has so far borne no tangible fruit.

Welensky must conduct a series of 'planned withdrawals' from his former entrenched positions, which he can no longer hold against the pace of African advancement and the force of British and world opinion. As with some other retreats, this one will be called an 'advance'. Of course he remains the archetypal artisan settlers' man, the boy from Pioneer Street on the wrong side of the tracks who made good. But he now has to keep together an increasingly refractory army, whose every private feels that his own job is under African fire, and lead it back to

unlocatable positions of undefinable defensive strength. Moreover he will have to cope with desertions to his left and right flank. The latter must be the more vulnerable, for in all the country's parliamentary history the political opposition has always been to the government's right.

What of the thunderer on the left, Garfield Todd? Since the Emergency, he has increasingly shown himself to be the only European leader capable of commanding any substantial degree of African support. His new Central Africa Party, which includes Sir John Moffat and his influential connection in Northern Rhodesia, still lacks positive representation in Nyasaland. Both its backbone and brain are still the old United Rhodesia Party that fell to disaster in the Southern Rhodesian election of June last year. And so far it has not won the support of the housewife and her artisan husband.

Todd, of course, is no leftist by British standards. In the present political imbroglio he can claim to be the one realistic leader with his feet moderately firm on the quaking ground, and an imaginatively constructive programme fitted to these circumstances. While at this moment the Party's exact proposals for the reform of the constitution and of the franchise are not finally settled, they are likely to contain entrenched clauses on the lines of a Bill of Rights, and a democratic widening of the franchise that would greatly increase the African voting strength.

It does not require much cynicism to remark that the last provision is Todd's only step-ladder to power, since under the ruling franchise qualifications the white voter is the supreme umpire. The Party is expending much energy in canvassing the African already. But it may be equally true and valid to say that the Federation can stay in one piece only through the African vote freely given in considerable strength.

Between times in Salisbury the cost of living rises a point or two, as does unemployment, while the unmitigated and unconscionable profit-margin still exacted by retail shops convinces more and more of the public that it cannot afford to live here. Neither of the two main budgets has afforded solid comfort to anybody, the small measure of industrial encouragement vouchsafed being quite inadequate for the task of increasing home-production or bringing in fresh risk-capital. For all the boosting, Kariba, like copper, remains an unknown quantity. And the light on Pearl Assurance House beams as brightly as ever over untenanted caves.